



MEN ON BOATS

WRITTEN BY: JACLYN BACKHAUS

DIRECTED BY: ELIZA LADD SCHWARZ

FEB. 21-22, 28 & MARCH 1 AT 7:30 P.M.

FEB. 23 AT 3 P.M.



CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY
College of Arts and Sciences

Theater

The Case Western Reserve University
Department of Theater presents

MEN ON BOATS

Written by: Jaclyn Backhaus

Directed by: Eliza Ladd Schwarz

Scenic Design

Jill Davis

Costume Design

Sophie Bruch

Lighting Design

Jeremy Paul

Sound/Projection Design

Nicholas Drashner

Assistant Sound Design

Carrena Spann

Movement Designer

Eliza Ladd Schwarz

This production contains moments of strobe and haze.

SETTING

On boats in 1869.

Traversing the Green and Colorado Rivers from Wyoming to a Big Canyon
and the government's first Sanctioned Expedition.

.....

CAST

JOHN WESLEY POWELL Maya Zimmer

WILLIAM DUNN Rachel Greidinger

JOHN COLTON SUMNER Mary Coulter

OLD SHADY..... Liv Carle

BRADLEY Reighan Bean

O.G. HOWLAND/JOHNSON Amir Aliyu

SENECA HOWLAND/JUST JIM Ying Zhao

FRANK GOODMAN/MR. ASA Evie Oehlers

HALL Abigail Gilman

HAWKINS Madeline Golya

PRODUCTION CREW

Stage Manager	Avry Rechel
Assistant Stage Manager	Daishanay Williams
Dramaturg	Macy Dickerson
Dialect/Voice Coach	Beth McGee
Light Board Op	Alex Alexander
Sound Op	Parker Crigger
Wardrobe #1	Katie Frick
Wardrobe #2.....	Kashmere Shafik
Backstage Crew #1.....	Dominic Monczewski
Backstage Crew #2.....	Ada Howard
Backstage Crew #3.....	Francisco Fernandez
Scene Shop Technicians	Lillian Kagy, Kiera Larrieu-Loucks, AJ Williams, Ella Merrill, Amanda Hsu, Justine Moore, Sean Cross, Jonah Halloran, Mary Coulter and special thanks to Emily Hawkins
Costume Shop Assistants	Ava Bee, Dominic Monczewski, Elizabeth Odife, Gerald Onyedika, Hunter Lin, Jack Exline, Jessica Pan, Karma Hairston, Mary Coulter, Sophie Bruch
Construction and Lighting Crew.....	Students enrolled in THTR 105, 185 and the CWRU/Cleveland Play House Graduate Acting Ensemble

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

A Queering of the Can(y)on

Sticks and stones are from the earth and words were planted later.

When I first read *Men on Boats*, I was intrigued by the challenge of how to craft four boats onstage, full of adventurers careening down the waterfalls of the Colorado River. I considered how to create a world which exists entirely in nature and embodies the rugged, strenuous existence of the 1869 Powell expedition, all for a contemporary blackbox theater.

We have staged this journey primarily with sticks and stones. Through a combination of improvisation and composition, performers create story and environment by working with objects, sound, and movement. This creative process is an invitation to the imagination of performer and audience.

Men on Boats lives in the historical context of post-Civil War, Manifest Destiny Expansion, popular interest in newness and the unknown, and the compulsion to explore, and name, the frontier, even as it was already inhabited by Indigenous people. This play offers social commentary about these ideas, as well as an opportunity for ten actors to embody the challenges and camaraderie of adventure in the “American West.”

Consider the impact on both actors and audience. Is *Men on Boats* a queering of the canon? What does it mean for female/non-binary/trans actors to embody these historical male adventurers in the 1869 White American exploration of the Grand Canyon? Does this casting provide the audience with an expanded understanding of the identities of the actors, and does our understanding of history change through this casting? What role does humor play in the reinterpretation of history and the expansion of our human spirit? And, is this creative process, and the building of a world with sticks and stones, also a potential queering of theatrical tradition and audience expectation?

I would like to extend special thanks to Toby Vera Bercovici, all the designers and stage management, and the cast of this show for all their collaborative creativity.

—Eliza Ladd Schwarz

DIRECTOR BIO



Eliza Ladd Schwarz (Director and Movement Designer) is a performer, director, stage writer, song maker, and movement designer from NYC. She is thrilled to be in her second year on the faculty at CWRU/Cleveland Play House MFA Acting Program after 10 years teaching at the FSU/Asolo Conservatory. Eliza has created original multi-

disciplinary work in NYC at PS 122, Dixon Place, Movement Research, the Knitting Factory, and Joyce Soho, and performed at La Mama, the Kitchen, NY Theater Workshop, and St. Ann's Warehouse, as well as with Shakespeare and Company in MA. Notable recent projects include *Selfie of the Ancients* and *Tigers Above, Tigers Below*—both original music theater pieces; *Agridulce / Bittersweet*—an Andrew W Mellon funded bi-lingual community project; *Work / Play / Work*—a theatrical ensemble zoom response to the 2020 call for social justice; and her solo works *Gravity and Levity* and *Autobiography of the Human Species*. *Men On Boats* is the first show Eliza has directed in Cleveland.

Currently, through the Glennan Fellowship at CWRU, Eliza is developing a new course, *Live Sound Action: Learning at the Crossroads of Performance and Design*. Also, she is initiating a new devised piece titled *Climate Transformation*. Eliza was choreographer and movement coach in the MFA at CPH productions of *The Tempest*, *Middletown* and *The Cherry Orchard*. She has worked as Intimacy Coordinator on numerous CWRU productions. At CWRU she teaches Undergraduate Acting, Movement, and Devising Original Theater, and in the Graduate MFA she teaches Movement.

Eliza holds a BA in Comparative Religion from Harvard University and an MFA in Theater: Contemporary Performance from Naropa University. www.elizaladd.com

CAST BIOS



Maya Zimmer (John Wesley Powell) is grateful to return to the Kalberer Blackbox with this crew of brothers. She is a second-year student double majoring in Theater and Sociology with a minor in Business Management. Recent acting credits include Mercy Lewis (*The Crucible*), Emily Webb (*Our Town*), Beth Powell (*John Proctor is the Villain*), and Chorus member (*Electra*).

Rachel Greidinger (William Dunn) is a third-year Theater major with minors in Mathematics and Communication Science. She is so excited to be performing in her sixth production with the Theater Department, and could be most recently seen as Mollie in *The Mousetrap*. She would like to thank Eliza for the incredible opportunity to go on this journey, and all her castmates for being her brothers and exploring the great unknown with her.



Mary Coulter (John Colton Sumner) is a junior majoring in Theater and Cognitive Science with a minor in Art History and is the president of the Players Theater Group on campus. They have just returned from a semester of classical acting at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts and are so happy to be back in the Kalberer Theater. Credits: Dromio of Syracuse (*Comedy of Errors*-

LAMDA), Shelby (*John Proctor is the Villain*), Orestes (*Electra*), Pisanio (*Cymbeline*), Velma Kelly (*Chicago*-Footlighters), Rosentrantz (*Hamlet*-PTG).

Liv Carle (Old Shady) is a senior majoring in Cognitive Science and Psychology. She has previously appeared with the CWRU Theater Department as Emilie in *The Moors*, and you may also recognize her from weekly IMPROVment performances. She would like to thank everyone involved with the production for creating such a wonderful experience.





Reighan Bean (Bradley) is a first-year student majoring in Theater. She is very excited to be making her debut with the Theater Department! The previous semester, you could have found her running backstage on *The Mousetrap* and working with PTG. She would like to thank the cast and crew (truly the entire department) for welcoming her with open arms and, as always, her friends and family. She hopes you enjoy the show!

Amir Aliyu (O.G. Howland/Johnson) is a fourth-year Computer Science major and English minor making a last-minute first foray into the world of theatre. This will be Amir's first and last production at CWRU, so it will for many reasons be unforgettable. Outside of theater, Amir enjoys reading afrofuturism, rock climbing, baking, and teaching— both as a TA for Operating Systems and as a Java and Python instructor. Many thanks to Chris Bohan's Acting 101 class for opening up the wonderful world of Theater at CWRU, and thank you all for coming! Amir can't wait to be on stage and hopes y'all enjoy the show.



Ying Zhao (Seneca Howland/Just Jim) is a sophomore double majoring in Psychology and Theater. She previously appeared as Somebody and Mind in PTG's *Everybody. Men On Boats* is her first department production at Case, and she is beyond excited to share this adventure with you. She thanks everyone for coming and hopes you enjoy the show!

CAST BIOS, *continued*



Evie Oehlers (Frank Goodman/Mr. Asa) is currently a freshman at CWRU studying Theater and Business Management. While this is her first performance with the department, she was in *Heathers* with CWRU's Footlighters last semester as Heather McNamara, and has been in numerous productions back in her hometown. She hopes you enjoy the show and thanks everyone for coming.

Abigail Gilman (Hall) is excited to take on this unique show with such a talented crew! She is a junior studying Theater and Political Science. Previous CWRU credits include *Cymbeline* (Imogen), *Dancing at Lughnasa* (Maggie), and *Silent Sky* (Williamina). She also assistant directed *Electra* for the department in Fall 2023. Thanks to Eliza and the entire creative team, cast, and crew!



Madeline Golya (Hawkins) is a fourth-year Theater and English major with a minor in Marketing. Some of her previous credits include Margaret Leavitt (*Silent Sky*), Raelynn Nix (*John Proctor is the Villain*) and Chrysothemis (*Electra*). Madeline is thrilled to conclude her time with the CWRU Theater Department in *Men on Boats* with such an exceptionally talented cast, crew, and creative team. She would like to thank her mom, dad, London, and Kine for supporting her throughout all of her endeavors over the past four years.

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION BIOS



Avry Rechel (Stage Manager) is a fourth-year student majoring in Computer Science and Theater. They are very excited to have stage managed a show for the CWRU Department of Theater, and would like to thank the cast and crew for their hard work. Previously, Avry has worked as an assistant stage manager and an assistant lighting designer for the CWRU Department of Theater, as well as

the technical director of Players Theatre Group in 2023 and 2024. Design credits include scenic designer for *Proof* and *The Fantasticks*, and lighting designer for *Gruesome Playground Injuries*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, and *Everybody*.

Daishanay Williams (she/her) (Assistant Stage Manager) is a third-year student at Case Western Reserve University studying Theater, Film, and English. She has helped backstage for the campus' theatre clubs and works as an orientation leader in the fall and spring. Off campus she can be found in yet another dark corner as the Stage Manager for Playhouse Square's Broadway Buzz talk shows.



Macy Dickerson (Dramaturg) is a fourth year English and Theater major in their last semester, and is thrilled to have the opportunity to work on *Men on Boats*. Previous department credits include acting in *Skin of our Teeth*, *Blood at the Root*, and *Electra*, as well as ASMin for *John Proctor is the Villain*. You may also know them as the former president of Players' Theatre Group, and from

acting in and directing various productions over in that world.

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION , *continued*



Jill Davis (Scenic Designer) is an Associate Professor at CWRU and serves as Resident Scenic Designer and for the Department of Theater. CWRU Department of Theater set designs include *Cabaret*, *Electra*, *Blood at the Root*, *Almost, Maine*, and *Arcadia*; and lighting designs include: *John Proctor is the Villain*, *Proof*, *The King Stag*. CWRU/CPH MFA Acting Ensemble set designs include *The*

Seagull, *Macbeth*, *Clybourne Park*, *Too True to Be Good*. Professional designs include *Every Brilliant Thing* (Cleveland Play House), *Chez Feydeau* (The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London), *A Doll's House* (The American Stage Theater Company), *The Other Place*, *Hurricane Diane*, *Marjorie Prime*, *The Flick*, (and others) for Dobama Theatre, *A Doll's House Part 2* and *Doubt* for Beck Center for the Arts.

Jeremy Paul (Lighting Designer) is a director, designer, and interdisciplinary artist. As the founder and Executive Artistic Director of Maelstrom Collaborative Arts since 2006, Jeremy facilitates and supports the creation of innovative performance and artistic experiences by local artists. As a director and deviser, he has led the creation of the original productions *Four Futures*, *The Wandering*,



Inferno, *Who We Used To Be*, *Don't Wander Off*, and *The Excavation*, directed the world or regional premieres of *Tall Skinny Cruel Cruel Boys*, *Black Cat Lost*, *My Barking Dog*, *Inoculations*, *Anna Bella Eema*, and *Stranded on Earth*. His lighting/projection designs have been seen recently at Dobama Theatre, Cleveland Play House, Karamu House, and Oberlin College. He is the Interdisciplinary Artist in Residence at the Cleveland Institute of Music and the Resident Technical Director at Dobama Theatre.



Sophie Bruch (Costume Designer) is a Junior majoring in Theater and History and is thrilled to have the opportunity to design a show for the department. Last Spring, she co-designed the costumes for *John Proctor is the Villain* with Angelina Herin and played Ellen in *Little Ordinary Things*. When she's not working on a show, Sophie enjoys spending time in nature, writing and making overly-intricate models.

Nicholas Drashner (Sound/Projection) serves as Associate Professor and resident sound and projection designer in the Department of Theater at Case Western Reserve University. His design credits include productions with companies such as Cleveland Play House, Dobama Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, The Public Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, East West Players, and Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble. He received an MFA in Sound Design and a BA in Interdisciplinary Computing in the Arts from University of California, San Diego.



Carrena Spann (Assistant Sound Design) hails from Columbia, SC, and a life spent in theater-making and the arts at large. A Drama graduate from The South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities, Carrena is excited to make a return to sound design. She, as a Department Full Tuition and Dunn Scholarship recipient, is extremely thankful to Prof. Drashner and the entire cast and crew, for their generosity and for cultivating the environment for such a rich learning opportunity, the department, as always, for their unending support, her 'tribe' on campus for always inspiring her towards excellence, and most sweetly, her deeply loving family who lift her up from home. She is grateful to Christ for the marvel of the wilderness, and the lessons we can all learn by exercising the bravery needed to stare our own limitations, perceived and real, in the eyes.

DEPARTMENT OF THEATER

Department Chair	Jeffrey Ullom
Artistic Director	David Vegh
Managing Director.....	Angelina Herin
Administrator	Elizabeth Rickel
Production Manager and Technical Director.....	Homer J. Farr
Scene Shop Manager and Assistant Technical Director ...	Nathan Kunst
Costume Shop Manager	Rainie J. Wilkes
Theater Coordinator	Gregory Przybylak
House Manager	Ashley Rosinski

BEHIND THE SCENES

The Theater Program gratefully acknowledges the generosity
of Friends of Theater contributors
and the following special support for the 2024–2025 Season:

Nadine Miles Endowment Fund

Designated departmental support for special projects.

Flora Stone Mather Alumnae Association

Scholarship support and guest lectureships for our undergraduate students.

Gerard and Marie Bechhold Gentile Endowment Fund

Major new acquisitions in Technical Theater and Design.

Malcolm and Louise Elsoffer Endowment Fund

Designated departmental support for theatrical productions.

FRIENDS OF THEATER 2024–2025

Mr. Thomas P. Leff
Mr. Ned Hitchcock, II
Cleveland Foundation
Cynthia G. Dettelbach, Ph.D.
Emmett J. Gossen, Jr., Ph.D. J.D.
James W. Simmelink, Ph.D.
Joyce A. Simmelink
Michael A. St. Clair, Ph.D.
Mr. Akshai Singh
Mr. David Foler
Ms. Amy Memis-Foler
Mr. Donald Charles Carrier
Mr. Frederick McGuire
Mr. Gary A. Nemeth
Mr. Guillermo Olivos
Mr. Mark A. Francioli
Mr. Thomas P. Gates
Mr. Thomas P. Leff
Mr. Troy Watson

Mrs. Judy Strauss-Schwartz
Mrs. M. Gail Jones-Nemeth
Mrs. Minna Silverman Buxbaum
Mrs. Robin Dunn Fixell
Mrs. Susan Sering
Ms. Amy Memis-Foler
Ms. Gretchen M. Hurst
Ms. Laurel A. Lockhart
Ms. Maeve McGuire
Ms. Maura A. Emerson
Ms. Susan Hess Lucier
P. Jeffrey Lucier
Peter T. Smith, Ph.D.
Prof. Catherine L. Albers
Prof. Jerrold Scott & Mr. Troy Watson
Rev. Dr. Susan K. Ventura
Sharmon Sollitto
The William R. Hill Charitable Fund
Theodore Herstand, Ph.D.

You can become a Friend of Theater instantly!

Text @cwrugive to 52014,
followed by #theater
and the dollar amount you wish to donate
or visit giving.cwru.edu/theater.

Checks, made payable to CWRU,
may be sent to
Friends of Theater
c/o The College of Arts and Sciences,
10900 Euclid Ave. Cleveland, OH 44106-7068

For more information, call 800.360.5308



**CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY**
College of Arts and Sciences
Theater